

ny Times Company

NEW YORK, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 10, 1971

F.B.I. Is Said to Have Cut Direct Liaison With C.I.A.

Hoover Move in Quarrel 1½ Years Ago Causes Concern Among Intelligence Officials About Coping With Spies

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Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 9—The Federal Bureau of Investigation broke off direct liaison with the Central Intelligence Agency a year and a half ago because the C.I.A. would not tell J. Edgar Hoover who had leaked information from his organization, according to authoritative sources.

As a result, high officials of the intelligence community are concerned about the Government's ability to control foreign espionage in this country. Their apprehension has been increased by the recent British discovery of extensive Soviet operations.

To offset some of the danger, officials of the F.B.I. and the C.I.A. have held private meetings, unknown to Mr. Hoover, at which they exchanged information. Authorized communication is limited to mail, telephone and infrequent special meetings.

F.B.I. Spokesman's Statement

Asked if it was true that the bureau broke direct liaison with the C.I.A. more than a year ago, an F.B.I. spokesman said today. "It is not true." He added, "The F.B.I. has always maintained liaison with the C.I.A., and it is very close and effective liaison." Spokesmen

for the C.I.A. could not be reached today.

The suspension of direct contact is one of the factors prompting leading members of the intelligence community to feel that Mr. Hoover must be deposed as Director of the F.B.I. The feelings of these officials run so high that some of them have dropped their customary secrecy to make their views known. Others remain silent because they fear public criticism might boom-erang, reinforcing Mr. Hoover's desire to continue in his post and evoking public support for him.

Reputation a Factor

Adding to the anxiety and anger of members of the intelligence community is Mr. Hoover's reputation. In their view, his personality is a compound of insecurity and authoritarianism. They fear the 76-year-old Director will do nothing to repair the breakdown in liaison between the two agencies and will try to remain as long as he can at the post he has held for 46 years.

Mr. Hoover's retirement has been periodically predicted and

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is said to be favored, for a variety of reasons, by several prominent members of the Administration. But so far there is no sign that he has lost the backing of the one person who counts—President Nixon.

Only four cases involving the exposure of foreign espionage agents in the United States have come to public attention in the last three years. Two of the cases involved the expulsion of Soviet agents; another involved two Cuban diplomats at the United Nations and a South African girl, and the fourth dealt with a Swiss Government official.

The story of the severance of F.B.I.-C.I.A. liaison begins with the disappearance of Prof. Thomas Riha in March, 1969. Mr. Riha was a Czech-born associate professor of modern Russian history at the University of Colorado.

The 40-year-old professor left the university abruptly, apparently took nothing with him and left a mysterious trail. He disappeared from the campus so suddenly that, though normally a neat and precise man, he left papers scattered on his university desk where he had been preparing his income tax return.

Friends and fellow faculty members said they feared that Professor Riha might be dead, but police officials in Boulder and Denver and the former president of the university, Dr. Joseph R. Smiley, insisted that he was alive.

Dr. Smiley told the press enigmatically at the time that he had been assured of the professor's safety "by what I consider reliable sources" in Washington.

"I repeat my real regret that I can't go beyond what I have said," he told The New York Times in a telephone interview in January, 1970. "A confidence is a confidence."

Confidential Information

What Dr. Smiley by then president of the University of Texas at El Paso, could not say was that he had been given the information concerning Professor Riha in confidence by an employee of the C.I.A.

The agency was interested in the Riha case because of the professor's Czech origin. It wanted to know if there had been foreign interference. The F.B.I. learned that there had been no foul play, that the professor had chosen to leave for personal reasons.

According to well informed sources, an individual agent in the F.B.I.'s large Denver office, acting on his own, told a C.I.A. employee in Denver. (The C.I.A. is restricted by law from operating as an intelligence agency within this country. The employee in Denver was involved in recruiting.)

The agency then suggested that the F.B.I. tell Dr. Smiley, who was very concerned about Mr. Riha's disappearance, what had happened on a confidential basis to quiet his and the community's fears. The bureau refused.

After the refusal, the C.I.A. went ahead and told Dr. Smiley, pledging him to secrecy. According to reliable sources, Dr. Smiley later inadvertently let it get out that there had been no foul play. The question arose at F.B.I. headquarters in Washington: How had the president of the university obtained this information?

The bureau office in Denver told headquarters that it had not given the information to anyone. It eventually was learned here, however, that an individual F.B.I. man had told the story to a C.I.A. man. For Mr. Hoover, the question then became: Which of my men gave out this information? He asked the C.I.A.

The C.I.A. man in Denver was inflexible. He told his superiors that the information had been given him in confidence and it was a matter of conscience. According to sources, he well knew what would happen to any F.B.I. man he named—at the least, exile to Montana; at the most, dismissal.

The C.I.A. man held his ground under pressure from the bureau, saying any disclosure would be a breach of faith. The Director of the C.I.A., Richard Helms, accepted his man's position and refused to force him to divulge the F.B.I. man's identity.

Irritated, Mr. Hoover broke



J. Edgar Hoover

Central Intelligence Agency. Until February of last year, the F.B.I. man who provided the personal link with the C.I.A. was Sam Papich. Mr. Papich grew up in Montana and worked in mines there before he attended Northwestern University. He played professional football, then went to work for the F.B.I.

Mr. Papich worked in Latin America for a while for the bureau and handled several special assignments. He later became the liaison officer between the bureau and the C.I.A. His reputation was that of an honest and sincere man with high professional competence and an insatiable appetite for work. Most importantly, in an area potentially fraught with jealousy, intrigue and deceit, he had the trust of the C.I.A. and the respect of the F.B.I.

When Mr. Hoover took his action, severing liaison, Mr. Papich was despondent. He is known to have beseeched the Director in the strongest language to reconsider, pleading that a close relationship between the two agencies was vital to controlling Communist-bloc intelligence operatives.

He is known to have told Mr. Hoover that the United States had never faced the kind of sophisticated and dangerous Soviet-bloc espionage that it did then, in 1970. He also argued that the complexity of intelligence cases, coupled with the swiftness of travel and communication, had made direct links necessary between the bureau and more than a dozen C.I.A. officials every day.

Mr. Papich said that communicating with the C.I.A. by mail would be an impossible arrangement and warned Mr. Hoover that a continuation of the rupture might leave a dangerous gap, which enemy agents would very likely try to exploit.

Urging a reconciliation, Mr. Papich retired from the bureau in March, 1970, expressing the hope that Mr. Hoover would appoint a new liaison officer who might more easily smooth over the difficulties between the two agencies. According to reliable sources, Mr. Hoover never responded to his pleas.

Only Limited Contact

Since the Denver incident, therefore, the bulk of the communication and coordination between the F.B.I. and the C.I.A. has been by telephone and correspondence, with very limited contact approved by Mr. Hoover on an ad hoc basis. Both agencies remain members of the United States Intelligence Board, and there is presumably also some interchange through the board.

But men in both the F.B.I. and the C.I.A. have found telephoning and mailing letters back and forth so grossly inadequate that they are known to meet with one another privately, without Mr. Hoover's knowledge.

One member of the intelligence community explained that personal contact is necessary for a variety of reasons: The cases are sometimes complex and sometimes split between the two agencies, speed is often essential to successful action, conferences involving several people are sometimes necessary, written material is occasionally involved and there are not enough secure telephone lines for the volume of work.

Information generally exchanged between the F.B.I. and the C.I.A. might concern such subjects as officers of the Black Panther party traveling overseas, Soviet diplomats en route

of an international arms dealer and American youngsters cutting sugar cane in Cuba.

In July of last year—four months after he had severed direct liaison with the C.I.A.—Mr. Hoover abolished the seven-man section that maintained contact with the Defense Intelligence Agency, the Office of Naval Intelligence, Army Intelligence, Air Force Intelligence, the Air Force Office of Special Investigations, the National Security Agency, the State Department, the Post Office, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, the United States Information Agency, the Bureau of Customs and the Immigration Service. These agencies were disappointed and distressed at the new arrangement.

Mr. Hoover is reported to have said the work of the section could be properly handled by telephone and correspondence.

The speculation within the F.B.I., however, was that Mr. Hoover had taken the action because of criticism he was getting about the rupture with the C.I.A. According to the speculation, he wanted to show that he was not discriminating against the C.I.A. and that all relations could be handled by phone and mail. The various agencies are still hoping that direct liaison will be re-established.

Members of the intelligence community here also pronounced themselves unhappy last week with the retirement from the F.B.I. of William C. Sullivan. Mr. Sullivan spent 30 years in the bureau, became an expert on domestic intelligence and rose to the position of assistant to the Director before Mr. Hoover reportedly became so unhappy with him that he changed the lock on Mr. Sullivan's door to force him out of the agency.

Mr. Sullivan, who has a reputation as a scholarly researcher on Communist philosophy and tactics and was known as a moderating force in the F.B.I., apparently had several disputes with Mr. Hoover. What triggered his forced retirement is not known. Members of the intelligence community report, however, that one of the arguments in which he was involved concerned surveillance of foreign agents in this country.

According to the intelligence officials, Mr. Sullivan asked some time ago for more men and money to counter Soviet-bloc espionage and was turned down by Mr. Hoover. For nine years Mr. Sullivan headed the F.B.I.'s Domestic Intelligence Division, and was reportedly concerned about the bureau's

ability to neutralize foreign spies.

Intelligence officials here say they now believe the F.B.I. is doing such a poor job in that area that the threat from foreign agents is substantial. They argue that Mr. Hoover is so intent on preventing any embarrassment to the F.B.I. or any sullying of his reputation that he avoids the risks of counter-espionage work.

As an example of such risks, the officials point out that an F.B.I. man might find himself apprehended by the police when he does a "bag job"—a surreptitious piece of counter-espionage sometimes involving illegal activity. Or, they say, if an F.B.I. man approaches a foreign diplomat and asks him to defect or spy, the bureau runs the risk of a refusal and possibly a diplomatic uproar.

Other sources in Government agree that the F.B.I.'s successes in the spy field do seem to be limited and to consist in large measure of defectors who appear at some F.B.I. office. But they argue that the main problem is the F.B.I.'s orientation as a criminal investigative agency.

"The agents are basically trained in criminal procedures and techniques and think in criminal terms," explained one official in the Justice Department. "The subtleties of intelligence work seem to elude them."

The Case of Abel

The classic example, the official said, was the famous case involving Col. Rudolf I. Abel, the Russian master spy who operated in the United States from 1948 until 1957. The case was really cracked not by the F.B.I., he said, but by the C.I.A.

The official explained that Reino Hayhanen, the Soviet defector who was the key to the case, walked into the F.B.I. liaison office in Paris in June, 1957, and began to tell his story but was cut short by the F.B.I. agent. The agent reportedly told him that what he had to say was interesting but was more in the C.I.A.'s area.

When Hayhanen went round to the C.I.A. office in Paris, the agents became excited, rang up the F.B.I. man, told him to listen to Hayhanen and sent him back.

The official—who said that the F.B.I. is still not doing well in counter-espionage—identified one problem as lack of expertise. "In Washington," he said, "there are some F.B.I. men who specialize in security, but in most other places a man can be working on both criminal and security cases on the same day. They don't have enough specialists."